DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 221 994 EC 150 062

AUTHOR Derr, Alice M.
TITLE Facilitating the Development of Moral Judgment Reasoning Skills in Learning Disabled Children and Adolescents.
PUB DATE 82
NOTE 28p.; Paper presented at the Annual International Conference of the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities (Chicago, IL, March 3-6, 1982).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adolescents; Children; *Learning Disabilities; *Moral Development; *Role Playing; Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS Kohlberg (Lawrence)

ABSTRACT

The paper examines the development of moral judgment in learning disabled children and adolescents and proposes three teaching strategies to encourage higher level moral reasoning: (1) moral dilemma discussions, (2) use of the consequence grid, and (3) role playing. The six stages of moral development proposed by L. Kohlberg are explained. Research on the moral development of learning disabled adolescents shows a tendency toward a constricted, egocentric, social perspective. The key to mature moral reasoning is seen to be the development of a comprehensive social perspective. The use of moral dilemma discussions are considered in terms of definition, purpose, selection of a moral dilemma, getting ready for the discussion, and procedure (such as presenting the dilemma, organizing a small group discussion, and guiding a whole class discussion). The consequence grid is suggested as an instructional aid to analysis of moral dilemma by examining matrix components. The grid charts consequences for each person against various alternative actions. It is suggested that the third recommended strategy, role playing, be started with roles and consequences initially predetermined followed by gradually decreasing structure. Adaptations to enhance role playing include the aside (having the character think aloud), the double (having another student speak for the character being played), and the role reversal (having characters exchange roles). (DB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED221994

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

FACILITATING THE DEVELOPMENT OF MORAL JUDGMENT REASONING SKILLS IN LEARNING DISABLED CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

A paper presented at
The 1982 International Conference of the
Association for Children and Adults with
Learning Disabilities, Chicago.
March 3-6, 1982

Alice M. Derr, Ed.D.
Assistant Professor of Education
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Clemson University
Clemson, SC 29631
803/656-3482

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Alice M. Derr
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

© 1982

EC150062

Facilitating the Development of

Moral Judgment Reasoning Skills in Learning Disabled

Children and Adolescents

Consider this situation:

"In Europe, a woman was near death from a special kind of cancer. There was one drug that the doctors thought might save her. It was a form of radium that a druggist in the same town had recently discovered. The drug was expensive to make, but the druggist was charging ten times what the drug cost him to make. He paid $200 for the radium and charged $2,000 for a small dose of the drug. The sick woman's husband, Heinz, went to everyone he knew to borrow the money, but he could only get together about $1,000, which is half of what it cost. He told the druggist that his wife was dying, and asked him to sell it cheaper or let him pay later. But the druggist said, "No, I discovered the drug and I'm going to make money from it." So Heinz gets desperate and considers breaking into the man's store to steal the drug for his wife" (Kohlberg, et. al. 1978).

1. Should Heinz steal the drug? Why or why not?
2. If Heinz doesn't love his wife, should he steal the drug for her? Why or why not?

Here are some responses of two high school students:

Student A. 1. "Yes. If his wife really depends on it and he really loves her, he should. She's depending on him to help her, too. If he was married to her for 25 years, maybe he needs her a lot, or she needs him a lot."

2. "No. If he doesn't care for her, maybe he was going to divorce her anyway, so let her die, I guess. He could get caught and put in jail for it, and if he didn't really love her, he'd be wasting the rest of his life."

Student B.

1. "Yes, but Heinz shouldn't have to be put in that situation - the druggist is a real jerk for forcing him into that situation, although he does have the right to make some profit. But it's his wife and he loves her so he should put his own life on the line to save her. The way Heinz feels, his morals, have nothing to do with the law, not when it comes to saving his wife's life. I'd put someone's life over the law."

2. "Yes, he should. There's a legal bond between them. He still owes her a responsibility - he made his vows when he married her. She's still another human being."

Which response do you think was made by a learning disabled adolescent, and which by a non-learning disabled adolescent? We will consider these responses later in this paper.

The story of Heinz was a moral dilemma, and the responses made by the two high school boys were moral judgments. A moral dilemma is a social or interpersonal situation which involves conflicting claims between persons or groups concerning the just distribution of goods, services, and emotions. A moral judgment is the reasoning strategy used by a person to decide which values to act on and whose claims to respect in a moral dilemma. The judgment which takes into account the positions or rights of all individuals involved would be the more just solution.

Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of the development of moral judgment reasoning skills provides the basis of this paper. Kohlberg's research documents that humans progress through six stages of moral development, similar to Piaget's stages of cognitive development (Kohlberg, 1969). Each stage is distinguished by the mode of reasoning used to solve moral conflicts, each higher stage using reasoning which resolves the conflicting values and claims for justice of human beings in progressively fairer and more comprehensive ways.

Kohlberg's six stages of moral development are categorized into three levels, each level containing two stages. A description of these stages of moral development follows (Kohlberg, et. al., 1978):

Level I. Preconventional Morality

Stage 1. Punishment/Obedience Stage. What is right is obedience to rules and authority, and avoiding punishment. One knows he has done right or wrong by whether or not he gets punished. It is the judgment of a person with the egocentric perspective of himself, who does not consider the interests of others.

Stage 2. Instrumental Purpose and Exchange Stage. Right is serving one's own or another person's needs, and making fair deals in terms of concrete exchange. The person can understand that his perspective differs from that of someone else and that one's perspective influences one's actions.

Level II. Conventional Morality

Stage 3. Mutual Interpersonal Concordance Stage. What is right is living up to what is expected of one in one's role as

defined by one's group, following rules and expectations. It is the perspective of an individual in relationship to others.

Stage 4. Social System and Conscience Stage. Right is doing one's duty in maintaining the system, upholding the social order and the welfare of society. This person views morality from the perspective of a society or system of interdependent groups.

Level III. Postconventional (Principled) Morality

Stage 5. Social Contract and Individual Rights Stage. Right is upholding the basic rights, values and legal contracts of a society, even when they conflict with the rules and laws of the group. This is a "prior to society" perspective, an awareness of the à priori rights upon which the society is based.

Stage 6. Universal Ethical Principles Stage. Right is guided by universal ethical principles which all humanity should follow. These are basically universal principles of justice: equality of human rights and respect for the dignity of human beings as individual persons.

Kohlberg's research shows that one develops through the stages in a sequential order, but development may be either accelerated or retarded, based upon one's experience (Kohlberg, 1971). Indeed, development could cease to progress altogether, as there are many adults who reason on relatively low levels. Generally speaking, most elementary-aged children reason on stages 1 and 2; adolescents

through young adults on stages 3 and 4. While not many people reason on stage 5, those that do are usually more mature adults.

As in Piaget's stage theory of cognitive development, one begins to reason more comprehensively through one's active interaction with the environment. By engaging in morally conflicting situations, one's reasoning skills develop. As more comprehensive reasoning develops, the person views the conflict from perspectives other than this own. Even by listening to other people reason at higher stages (usually one stage higher is best) a person broadens his perspective, becoming more and more able to integrate and evaluate the conflicting values and claims to justice (Blatt and Kohlberg, 1975).

Research data shows when learning disabled adolescents are faced with a dilemma involving conflicting moral values, they often used reasoning which showed that rightness was to follow rules when it was to someone's immediate interest, (stage 2) (Derr, 1980). While learning disabled adolescents were beginning to integrate their own interests with group norms and values (stage 3), they still retained a great deal of reasoning from an egocentric (stage 2) perspective, which defined right and wrong in terms of the needs and desires of the self and/or other individuals.

In contrast, the average response of non-learning disabled adolescents demonstrated that these adolescents used very little egocentric (stage 1 or 2) moral reasoning, relying primarily on defining right and wrong from a community (stage 3) or even societal (stage 4) perspective. Understanding the inter-relationships of groups within a community and communities within a society, the non-learning disabled adolescents recognized and solved the conflicting moral issues within a dilemma in terms of consequences to self, community and society.

One can use this information to analyze the aforementioned responses of the two high school students to the Heinz Dilemma.

The Heinz Dilemma has the conflicting claims to justice of Heinz, his wife, and the druggist. It has the conflicting values of the societal rules against stealing and the human value of the preservation of life.

Student A was a 15 year old boy, in 9th grade, with an IQ of 98, and was learning disabled. The average learning disabled adolescent did not integrate the conflicting values. Student A based his decision on Heinz's needs and desires - if he needed his wife to live or not - and if saving her life was worth the risk of getting caught and going to jail.

Student B was also 15 years old, in 10th grade, with a grade point average of 2.5 (between B and a C) and received no special services. The average non-learning disabled adolescent could take into account the conflicting claims of all persons involved, and could recognize the conflicting moral issues of the value of law vs. life. Student B was able to integrate thisinformation and prioritize the values. He also recognized societal expectations of Heinz's role of husband.

A review of research on the cognitive developmental approach to moral reasoning reveals the importance of social perception in formulating judgments (Rubin and Schneider, 1973; Selman, 1971; Yussen, 1976). Social perception can be defined as the process by which one perceives himself in relation to the behavior of other people. It seems that a central factor in social perception is "social perspective-taking", which allows one to understand his own behavior from the perspective of another person or group of persons. Through perspective-taking, a child comes to understand what makes friendships evolve, or end, he can anticipate and repair interpersonal conflicts, and he can understand societal expectations (Damon, 1977).

It has been suggested that social perception has a cognitive component. Johnson and Myklebust (1967) stated many learning disabled youth have a deficit in social perception, making them unable to perceive others' feelings and actions through misinterpretation of social cues, such as body language, tones of voices, facial expressions. Bryan's (1977) work and research by Wiig and Harris (1974) tends to substantiate this theory. Distractibility, poor impulse control, and problems with information processing may hinder integration of present social stimuli with past social experiences, so that learning disabled youth may fail to anticipate the consequences of their actions.

Indeed, in solving moral dilemmas, learning disabled adolescents revealed a constricted, rather egocentric, social perspective (Derr, 1980). If the learning disabled child or adolescent does not view the consequences of his and others' actions from a community or societal perspective, he may be limited in his ability to understand conventional group processes and expectations, and may be less likely to accept group-normed standards and values. These deficits may make it difficult for some learning disabled youth to formulate the moral judgments necessary to guide their behavior in times of moral conflict.

The keystone to mature moral reasoning appears to be the development of a comprehensive social perspective. One must be able to differentiate and solve conflicting moral issues in an ever-widening perspective. In a moral conflict, the student must:

1. delineate the alternatives for action
2. anticipate the consequences of each alternative, not only in terms of the major parties involved, but also in terms of the community and the societal values.

The following three strategies are designed to facilitate the development of a wider social perspective and to encourage higher level reasoning in making moral judgments. The three strategies: (1) moral dilemma discussions, (2) the consequence grid and (3) role-playing can effectively be used separately or in any combination.

Moral Dilemma Discussions

Definition

A student, or group of students, is presented with a social situation which involves a moral conflict. The central character in the situation has to decide between alternative possibilities for action. Students have a discussion, guided by the teacher, to try to determine what action should be taken, and why. It is not necessary to reach consensus or closure.

Purpose

Research has shown that moral dilemma discussions conducted on a consistent basis (several times per week) leads to a significant increase in the stage of moral reasoning - approximately 25-50% of the students could move completely (or partially) to the next stage in one year (Blatt and Kohlberg, 1975). Results hold over time. In control groups this does not happen. In a discussion group which contained a mixture of stages, students at lower levels were exposed too, and attracted by, thinking at higher stages. This higher level, more comprehensive thinking became incorporated into future reasoning strategies.

Children learn that they can reason about their behavior, they can and do choose to behave. They begin to see both sides of a conflict, and to predict the consequences of their behavior.

How to Select Moral Dilemmas

Teachers can use hypothetical dilemmas based on realistic situations: "Your best friend shoplifts a bracelet - should you tell the manager?" Real conflicts which occurred in school or the community can be discussed: "Your friend wants you to help send hate mail to the black family that just moved into the neighborhood." Filmstrips which illustrate conflicts in human relationships, or dilemmas from television, newspapers, literature or historical accounts can also be used.

A good dilemma for discussion includes issues of fairness, justice, rights, obligations or duties, and should hold consequences to other people which may hurt or help them. There should be at least two alternative choices of action readily apparent.

Getting Ready for the Discussion

Have a heterogenous grouping of children. Children will be at several stages of reasoning and can challenge the ideas of each other. Mix different ages of learning disabled students, or mix learning disabled with normal learners.

Establish a nonthreatening classroom. Students must feel free to say what they want and not back down when challenged. The teacher should be ready to give up his position of authority. He should guide and probe the discussion, but not preach. Seating the students in a circle, with the teacher as part of the circle, will aid in this manner.

Procedures

1. Present Dilemma (5 min.)

   Read, view or listen to the dilemma. Ask a student to summarize it and identify the protagonist and other characters. Clarify terms, facts and circumstances. Have students describe the alternative choices open to

the protagonist. The following dilemma might be a good one to use with young adolescents (Blatt, Colby and Speicher, 1974).

Parent's Control Over Children's Property

"Michael was a fourteen-year-old boy in a family of five children. The father was working but the family was always short of money. Michael's mother couldn't work because she had to take care of the entire family. Michael got a part-time job delivering groceries after school, which paid $15 per week. When he received his first pay check he wondered what to do with the money. He knew that his parents really needed the money. However, he wanted to go out for the football team very much and at his school each player had to buy his own uniform. When he got home, his parents asked him for the money but he hated to give up football for the year."

What should Michael do with the money? Give your reasons for your answer.

2. Create a Division of Action (5 min.)

Have each student write, or tell, what the protagonist, Michael, should do, and give one reason. In this dilemma, students should decide whether Michael should give the money to his parents, or keep it to buy the uniform.

3. Organize a small group discussion (10 min.)

The teacher has several ways to divide the students into small groups. One is to place students who agreed with one another in step #2 into the same group. Since they all agree as to what action Michael should take, they can concentrate on developing their reasoning skills. Students should share the reasons for their choice, and rank them from the most important reason to the least important reason.

This will facilitate listening to, and evaluating, several stages of moral reasoning. Then students should prepare questions to ask the opposing side.

Example:

a. Mike should keep the money.

Reasons: 1. He has a right to keep what he earned.

2. Playing football might get him a scholarship to college.

3. The team may need him to win.

b. Mike should give money to parents.

Reasons: 1. The family needs the money to live on.

2. They've bought his food and clothing for fourteen years; now it's his turn to help.

3. If he helps them now, maybe they'll help him later when he needs it.

The teacher can also divide students into groups which contain proponents for both sides. The small group discusses and debates reasons for both sides, and then ranks the reasons.

If the whole group agrees on one action, the teacher can change the facts of the dilemma in some way. For instance, if the total class says Michael should keep the money, say "What if the father was ill and could not work?" If all the students say Michael should give the money to his parents, say "What if he was the best quarterback and the team has a chance to win the state championship?" This may stimulate differences of opinion.

4. Guide a Whole Class Discussion (10 min.)

After the total group has come back together again, begin group reports. One person from a small group gives the ranked reasons, and the other groups are given a chance to ask questions. Continue in this manner until all groups have reported. A free flow discussion then normally ensues.

The teacher helps keep the discussion flowing by asking probe questions designed to broaden students' thinking about possible consequences and challenge students to reason at higher levels.

The teacher can use the following questions:

Clarifying Question - to help students make clear the meaning of their own statements.

John: "Michael should respect his elders."

Teacher: "John, what do you mean by respect?"

John: "It means to do what he tells you so you won't get whupped."

Perception-checking Question - to see if other students understand what one student just said.

Mary: "Maybe the family is below poverty-level and needs the money to sustain itself."

Teacher: "Sheila, can you tell me in your own words what Mary said?"

Sheila: "They're really poor and need the money to buy food?"

Interstudent Evaluation Question - to bring a nonparticipating student into the discussion.

Mark: "Maybe the football team really needs him - he owes it to the team to keep the money."

Teacher: "Chuck, what do you think of what Mark just said?"

Moral Issue Question - to focus the attention on the main moral issue.

Sue: "His father has been good to him all these years, so he should give him the money to thank him."

Teacher: "Should children have the same rights to control their own property as adults?"

Role-Switch Question - to encourage a student to look at the situation from the point of view of another character in the dilemma.

Ralph: "Michael should give the money to his father. Football isn't very worthwhile, anyway."

Teacher: "Do you think the football coach would agree with that statement? How would he feel?"

Universal Consequences Question - to encourage a broad perspective in analyzing a dilemma.

Nancy: "I don't think Michael should give the money to his family, he's entitled to it - he earned it!"

Teacher: "What would happen to the family if each child thought that way? What if the father decided to keep all the money he earned? What would our lives be like if every family head did that?"

5. Closing the Discussion (5 min.)

The teacher asks each student to reevaluate his original position and reason, answering two questions: 1) "What should Michael do?" 2) "What is the most important reason for doing it?"

One unusual way to have students make known their choice is to form a human continuum. Draw an imaginary line across the classroom.

One end of the line is the point where a student should stand if he believes very strongly that Michael should keep the money, and the other end of the line is the point where a student should stand if he believes very strongly that Michael should give the money to his parents. Students line up according to their position and verbally state their main reason for selecting that point.

To end the session, students could interview others, write a new dilemma or act out the solution.

The Consequence Grid

Definition

A consequence grid is a visual aid used to help a student generate several alternatives for behavior and delineate the consequences for each behavioral choice in terms of the effects on himself (stage 1), significant other individuals (stage 2), the group to which he belongs (stage 3), and the community or society (stage 4).

Purpose

Learning disabled students need to learn a problem-solving approach to guide them in making moral judgments. They may impulsively cling to one alternative for action, and not consider others. They have difficulty matching consequences with behavior. They may not be able to reason through a dilemma in an organized manner, especially if the discussion is presented in an auditory/verbal mode. The consequence grid provides a visual-analytic framework.

Format

This is an instructional aid, used in conjunction with a real or hypothetical moral dilemma. It is an adaptation of two techniques in Values Clarification (Simon et. al. 1978): "Alternatives Search" and "Consequences Search".

The teacher helps the student analyze a moral dilemma by constructing a chart, or matrix, and discussing the components of the matrix.

Procedures

1. Present the moral dilemma. This dilemma is one to which many children will relate.

   "Mary recently moved to a new neighborhood, where she enrolled in the junior high school. She is very lonely and misses the close friendships she had in her old neighborhood and school.

   One day while walking down the street she runs into Jane, a very popular girl in her new school. Jane invites Mary to go shopping on Saturday, and Mary is thrilled - here was her chance to get in with the popular group of girls at school which she'd so admired!

   On Saturday, Mary and Jane discovered they shared interests and were having a wonderful time shopping. In the last store they visited, however, Mary saw Jane slip a tube of lipstick off the counter into her pocket. When Jane saw Mary staring at her, Jane said, "What're you staring at? It's just a lipstick - no big deal. The store can afford it. It's expected - everyone does it. You'll try it next time. Now let's split and talk about the party I'm going to have."

   What should Mary do?

2. The teacher asks students to list all the possible things that Mary could do at the moment. Write these alternative behavioral choices across the top of the Consequence Grid (see Figure 1). If the students cannot contribute more than one or two choices, the teacher can ask questions designed to broaden their thinking: "Is there anyone Mary could talk to this about?" Encourage all types of alternative actions, both socially acceptable and unacceptable.

Figure 1

CONSEQUENCE GRID ALTERNATIVES

IF MARY DOES THIS: / WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO:	1. KEEP HER MOUTH SHUT. PLAN PARTY WITH JANE.	2. SHOPLIFT ON ARTICLE HERSELF.	3. TELL JANE TO PUT LIPSTICK BACK, OR YOU WON'T BE FRIENDS WITH HER.	4. GO TELL THE CLERK OR STORE MANAGER.	5. TELL SCHOOL GUIDANCE COUNSELOR. ASK FOR ADVICE.
A. Mary	Mary will become friends with Jane, and get invited to her parties. She'll get in with the crowd. Mary have to begin shoplifting, too.	If she doesn't get caught, Mary will be friends with Jane's crowd. or If she is caught, she may be sent to juvenile jail. Her parents may punish her. She may get a criminal record.	Jane may never speak to Mary again, and Mary may be blacklisted from the group. But Mary won't have to shoplift. or Mary may be friends with Jane if Jane puts the lipstick back.	Mary may be thanked by the store manager. But Mary will lose her friendship with Jane and Jane's friends.	Mary won't have to face Jane all by herself.
B. Jane	Jane will not get caught. Jane may continue to shoplift, maybe even more expensive items.	Jane will be happy that Mary is following her.	Jane may get angry and walk away. or Jane may put it back and not shoplift anymore.	Jane will get into alot of trouble. Her parents will punish her. She may get a criminal record.	Jane may get some advice in helping her to stop shoplifting. or Jane may get into trouble if her parents are called.
C. Mary's Family	They may be glad that Mary is popular or They may not like Jane and her friends.	They would be embarrassed if Mary got caught. Their names would be in the newspaper. They may have to pay a fine or appear in court.	They may be proud of Mary, but they get involved.	Same as #3	Probably no consequences to Mary's family.

Figure 2

CONSEQUENCE GRID
ALTERNATIVES

IF MARY DOES THIS: / WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO:	1. KEEP HER MOUTH SHUT. PLAN PARTY WITH JANE.	2. SHOPLIFT ON ARTICLE HERSELF.	3. TELL JANE TO PUT LIPSTICK BACK, OR YOU WON'T BE FRIENDS WITH HER.	4. GO TELL THE CLERK OR STORE MANAGER.	5. TELL SCHOOL GUIDANCE COUNSELOR, ASK FOR ADVICE.
D. Mary's classmates and school	If Mary and Jane ever get caught, they may lose all respect in school. School and classmates may be in a scandal.	Classmates and school may get a bad reputation if Mary gets caught. Maybe the store won't allow her friends in the store to shop.	Some classmates may not accept Mary in their group, others may.	Some of Jane's friends may also get punished. They may not be allowed back in the store. School's name may be in the newspaper. School and classmates may get a bad reputation.	Counselor may involve all of the crowd in counseling sessions.
E. The Store	Store will lose money from the articles that Jane continues to steal. Store may raise prices to cover losses and increased insurance premium.	Same as #1.	If Jane puts lipstick back, store will not lose money. If she doesn't, same as #1.	Store will recover merchandise. It may involve police.	If shoplifting stops as a result of counseling, store will not lose money.
F. The Town and Townspeople	Townspeople may have to pay more for all merchandise they buy to cover losses from shoplifting. Employees may not get as large raises as they had in the past. Town may get a reputation for crime, and if businesses close, alot of people might lose their jobs.	Same as #1.	Depending on what Jane does, either #1 or #5.	If store continues to catch shoplifters, the people may not have to pay increased prices.	If shoplifting decreases, people will feel safer and continue to shop in the town. Prices will not go up, so employees will keep their jobs and get raises.

3. Down the left-hand "Consequences" column, list the primary characters in the dilemma; in this case, first Mary, then Jane. Elicit from the students what would happen to Mary, if Mary did Alternative #1. Write down the response. Continue with Alternative #2, 3, 4, etc. Then do the same with what would happen to Jane, if Mary did each action (see Figure 1).
4. Next, the teacher should try to expand the student thinking, by asking what would be the consequences of each alternative action to: the group to which she belongs (Mary's parents, classmates, or school) and the community/society to which she belongs (Mary's neighborhood, the store, or town.)
5. The teacher, with the student, reviews each column in turn, discussing the full range of consequences for each alternative behavior (see figure 2).
6. The student makes a decision as to which action the protagonist should take, and lists the main reasons for the choice.

Role-Playing

Definition

A group of students "act-out" a situation involving a social/moral conflict. Each student is given the role of a particular character to act-out, and the drama usually proceeds spontaneously.

Purpose

Many learning disabled youth have difficulty in viewing a social situation from another person's perspective (Bryan, 1977). Taking another's point of view is a prerequisite for making a moral judgment from a group or societal perspective (stages 3 and 4). Role-playing can help a child understand the

consequences of behavior from others' viewpoints. For learning disabled children who have difficulty in thinking through a problem and visualizing outcomes, role-playing serves as a more concrete form of problem solving. It involves the affective and psychomotor domains, as well as the cognitive.

Role-playing can be used alone, or in conjunction with moral dilemma discussions and the consequence grid, to give the learning disabled child the opportunity to try out his suggested solutions to dilemmas, and to experience the consequences of these solutions in a safe environment. After role-playing, the student may decide to make a beneficial adjustment to his original solution.

Procedure

1. Begin with a structured role-play, where the action is already defined for the students. Perhaps act-out the different alternatives for action from the consequence grid.

   For example,

   a. Choose students to play Jane and Mary. Act out the dilemma involving Mary moving to a new school, her loneliness, and the shoplifting incident.

   b. The teacher reads through the dilemma, pausing while the students act out what was just read. Encourage the students to add conversation appropriate to the action.

   c. The teacher reads down column 1 (Figure 1), having Mary "keep her mouth shut." As each consequence (a-f) is read, have students act out the roles and formulate appropriate conversation.

   d. Continue the role play, acting out each consequence for each behavioral alternative. Rotate the parts of Mary and Jane.

2. As role-playing progresses throughout the year, structure the roles and consequences less and less.

   a. First read a hypothetical dilemma, or recount an actual dilemma to the students, such as:

      "You and your friends are playing baseball in the street. You swing the bat and the baseball hits a tree and then ricochets into a neighbor's window. You notice that the neighbor is not home right now." What should you do?

   b. The teacher chooses a group of students to act out the scene and encourages them to prepare their own solution. Perhaps the children make up an ending where they decide to run away since no one saw them, and not tell anyone.

   c. After this solution is played out, the teacher continues the role-play dilemma by introducing more characters who are affected by the student's choice:

      "It begins raining and the neighbor returns home to find his broken windows and his living room carpet and furniture all wet. He calls up his insurance agent, who tells him he's not covered for the damages. It will cost $300 to replace the windows and the damage to the drapes and carpet. The only way they can pay for it is to not let their son go to summer camp."

      Now have the neighbor, his wife and son act out this scene.

   d. Have a discussion after the role-play. Select another group of children to play the situation from the beginning, but choosing a different solution to the dilemma. Continue to bring in more characters so that the group will see the consequences of their behavior.

Adaptations

Newcomer (1980), describes special dramatic techniques to further enhance the student's ability to take another perspective. These techniques could be used in role-playing the shoplifting dilemma, described earlier.

The Aside. The character thinks aloud, expressing his feelings about the action he is about to do, or has done. For example, after Jane slips the lipstick into her pocket, Mary can give an aside to the audience, describing how she feels now. Mary can come forward, face the audience and perhaps say, "I know that what Jane did is wrong, but if I tell her so, she won't like me anymore, and I really need her to help me make friends with the otherkids at school. I really miss my old friends." This will give Jane some indication of how she should proceed in convincing Mary not to tell on her.

The Double. Sometimes a character does not play the role realistically, or doesn't recognize the interpersonal conflicts in the dilemma. In this case, another student joins the character on stage, stands next to him and does the same actions, but speaks for the character. For example, perhaps after watching Jane take the lipstick, Mary immediately seeks out the manager to report the crime. This action may be unrealistic, as Mary did not seem to address the conflict of friendship vs. property rights. So the teacher could choose another student, one who is able to empathize with other people, and ask her to play Mary's double. Thus, in re-doing this scene, before Mary goes to the manager, Mary's double could say, "I really don't know what to do. If I tell the manager, Jane will hate me and I really need to go to that party. But if I don't tell the manager, Jane may expect me to steal something too, and then I might get caught!"

The Role Reversal. The characters exchange roles, so that they are better able to understand the perspectives of the other characters involved. Suppose that during role-play, Mary decides to shoplift an item from the store also. The teacher could stop the scene and ask that the student who was playing Mary, now play Mary's mother when she is called to pick up Mary at the store where she was caught shoplifting. Now the student must assume the mother's role, and view Mary's actions from that perspective. The student will more readily feel the heartbreak of the mother, and perhaps even recognize a group/societal moral perspective: "How could you do this to our family? We've brought you up to respect property of other people and to always work for what you get."

Closing the Role-Playing

The role-playing should end with a discussion by the whole group, including the cast of characters and the audience. Lead the discussion as a moral dilemma discussion, trying to challenge children's reasoning to expand their thinking about the consequences of their actions.

A concern for the moral development of learning disabled youth seems warranted. Learning disabled children and adolescents, through the use of such teaching strategies as discussion groups, role-playing and forming consequence grids, can learn to analyze social and moral conflicts from group perspectives. They can learn to generate several alternative behaviorial choices, and to anticipate the consequences of each choice, not only upon themselves, but in a broader social perspective. Schools, in cooperation with the home and other social agencies, can play a major role in helping students to reason and act in a morally responsibile manner.

References

Blatt, M., Colby A. and Speicher, B. Hypothetical Dilemmas for Use in Moral Discussions. Cambridge, Mass.: Moral Education and Research Foundation, Harvard University, 1974.

Blatt, M. and Kohlberg L. The effects of classroom moral discussions upon children's level of moral development. Journal of Moral Education, 1975, 4, 129-161.

Bryan, T. Learning disabled children's comprehension of nonverbal communication. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 1977, 10 (8), 36-41.

Damon, W. The Social World of the Child. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1977.

Derr, A. The moral judgment and conduct of learning disabled adolescent boys as compared to average achieving adolescent boys. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Arizona, 1980.

Johnson, D. and Myklebust, H. Learning Disabilities: Educational Principles and Practices. New York: Grune and Stratton, 1967.

Kohlberg, L. Stage and sequence: the cognitive-developmental approach to socialization. In D. Goslin (Ed.) Handbook of Socialization Theory and Research. New York: Rand McNally, 1969.

Kohlberg, L. Stages of moral development as a basis for moral education. In C. M. Beck, B. S. Crittenden, and E. V. Sullivan (Eds.) Moral Education -- Interdisciplinary Approaches. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971.

Kohlberg, L., Colby, A., Gibbs, J., Speicher-Dubin, B., and Power C. Assessing Moral Stages: A Manual, Preliminary Edition, Center for Moral Education, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.: July, 1978.

Newcomer, P. Understanding and Teaching Emotionally Disturbed Children. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1980.

Rubin, K. and Schneider, F. The relationship between moral judgment, egocentrism, and altruistic behavior. Child Development, 1973, 44, 661-665.

Selman, R. The relationship of role-taking to the development of moral judgment in children. Child Development, 1971, 42, 79-91.

Simon, S., Howe, L. and Kirschenbaum, H. Values Clarification: A Handbook of Practical Strategies for Teachers and Students. New York: Hart Publishing Co., 1978.

Wiig, E. and Harris S. Perception and interpretation of nonverbally expressed emotions by adolescents with learning disabilities. Perceptual and Motor Skills, 1974, 38, 239-245.

Yussen, S. Moral reasoning from the perspective of others. Child Development, 1976, 47, 551-555.